

Executive Branch Employee Transfer Survey Results



State Human Resources Report

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Note: Alternative accessible formats of this report will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the State Human Resources Division, Department of Administration, 125 N. Roberts St., PO BOX 200127, Helena, MT 59620-0127. Telephone 406-444-3871. Those using a TTY may call through the Montana Relay Service at 711.

Chris Kenison of [Chris Kenison Photography](#) contributed the "Looking Up" Capitol Rotunda photo for the front cover. Chris is a state employee with Montana State Fund.

Executive Summary

State Human Resources staff interviewed employees who recently transferred between executive branch agencies. We conducted the interviews to gather information about employees' reasons for voluntarily transferring between agencies. We also solicited feedback regarding employees' experiences working for the executive branch and asked respondents to provide advice and suggestions for their former management teams. Our results are summarized below. Individual interview questions and responses are not included in this report, but may be obtained by contacting Lisa Coligan at 406-444-3854 or lcoligan@mt.gov.

Interview Process

We administered a telephone interview with employees who voluntarily transferred between executive branch agencies from November 1, 2010 through October 31, 2011. Ninety-six employees voluntarily transferred between executive branch agencies during this time frame. We attempted to conduct telephone interviews with all 96 employees and reached 85 of them for an overall response rate of 89 percent. A chart detailing the number of employees voluntarily transferring to and from each executive branch agency is located in Appendix A.

We asked each respondent a list of open-ended questions about their experiences with their former executive branch agencies. We asked respondents to comment on their relationships with their former supervisors and sought feedback on availability of training, advancement, and flexible scheduling opportunities. We also asked respondents their primary reason for transferring to another executive branch agency and asked them to tell us what their new positions offer that their previous positions did not provide. Finally, we asked them for suggestions for improving their former agencies' abilities to retain employees. We analyzed the results and identified common themes, trends and recommendations, which are summarized in the next sections.

Results Summary

Respondents were constructive and thoughtful when providing feedback. The following themes emerged from their comments.

Respondents Frequently Cited Management Concerns

Respondents' reasons for transferring generally fell into two categories, the largest of these being problems related to management. Thirty-five percent of respondents cited management or supervisor problems as their primary reason for transferring. Respondents cited various examples of poor management, including failure to address problems or difficult co-workers, pressure to take on high workloads, lack of support and trust, favoritism, and poor treatment. A few respondents described very poor treatment. Approximately five respondents indicated they were frequently yelled at or berated by their former supervisors.

Most respondents left because of problems with their immediate supervisors, but some left because of issues with upper management. Those leaving because of upper management usually cited frustrations with lack of accountability or forced reorganizations as their reasons for transferring.

Respondents were also asked to comment directly on their former supervisors' abilities to manage people. Almost half of respondents expressed concerns about their former supervisors' management abilities. Over 20 percent of respondents strongly felt their former supervisors did not do a good managing others, and an additional 28 percent indicated their former supervisors could have done a better job. Thirty-five percent of respondents felt their former direct supervisors did a good job of managing people. Some respondents were hesitant to answer this question and a few did not answer it.

Respondents Valued Advancement Opportunities

Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated they transferred primarily to advance their careers. Some respondents transferred to take on management positions. Others advanced to more challenging positions in their fields. Some transferred into similar positions but indicated they did so because their new agencies offer more career advancement and growth opportunities.

Respondents were asked whether their previous positions offered opportunities for career advancement. Approximately 60 percent of them stated their previous positions did not offer advancement.

Although not every respondent lacking advancement opportunities transferred for this reason, respondents were generally interested in opportunities to challenge themselves and advance and grow at work. Not only was opportunity to advance the second most common reason given when respondents were asked why they transferred, but more than 40 percent of respondents cited growth, challenges, or advancement when asked if their new positions offered anything their previous positions did not provide.

Few Employees Transferred for Higher Pay

Very few respondents indicated pay as their primary reason for transferring agencies. Five respondents listed pay as their sole reason for transferring. Four additional respondents listed pay as their top reason for transferring, but these respondents also indicated additional reasons for transferring. Four respondents informed us they took pay cuts to escape difficult working situations.

We did not directly ask respondents if their new positions offered different pay rates than their previous positions. Respondents were asked if their new positions offered anything their previous positions did not offer. Twenty-four percent of respondents indicated their new positions offer better pay. Only one respondent indicated pay was the only thing their new position offers.

Other Reasons for Transferring

Although more than 60 percent of respondents transferred to escape poor management situations or pursue advancement opportunities, employees did transfer for a few other reasons. We addressed pay above. A handful of respondents also left for personal reasons. They wanted to travel less, work closer to home, work flexible hours, or have less responsibility. Almost 13 percent of respondents transferred because they wanted a different type of work. Some of these respondents indicated they took their original positions in fields unrelated to their career interests. Some did so because they were unemployed or not yet qualified for the field they wanted to pursue. Others felt they wouldn't be seriously considered for positions in their fields of interest unless they had previous state experience. Two respondents pursued different work opportunities because they realized they were not a good fit for the clients they were required to help.

Recommendations Summary

Respondents made a variety of recommendations for their previous agencies. We've summarized the recommendations below.

Respondents expressed a strong desire for their former management to address workplace problems and hold employees accountable. Some advised management to address problems with negative or unproductive co-workers. Many respondents advised upper management to address problem supervisors.

Most respondents felt their previous agencies did a good job of providing them with the technical training needed to learn and do their jobs. Yet, many respondents offered training related suggestions for their previous employers. Several respondents believed their former supervisors were never trained to be managers. They suggested their former agencies could reduce management problems by training and preparing their supervisors for management positions. Some respondents recommended communications training and several advised their former agencies to offer growth and development training.

Many respondents suggested their former agencies could do more to make their employees feel valued. A few respondents advised their former agencies to give employees more freedom and autonomy over their work. Some respondents suggested their former agencies offer more flexible schedules and work environments and a few respondents advised their former agencies to elicit and consider employee input.

Fifty-one percent of respondents said they would recommend employment with their previous agency to friends or family members. Twenty-one percent indicated they would not recommend employment with their previous agencies. The remaining 28 percent gave a variety of responses. Some would recommend their previous agency but discourage others from applying for their previous positions. Others were undecided or would only recommend their previous positions with strong reservations.

Appendix A

Voluntary Transfers Between Executive Branch Agencies*

Agency	Voluntary Transfers From:	Voluntary Transfers To:
Administration	10	13
Agriculture	2	2
Commerce	6	6
Corrections	11	8
Environmental Quality	2	8
Fish, Wildlife, & Parks	7	3
Governor's Office	3	0
Justice	5	8
Labor & Industry	13	11
Livestock	0	1
Military Affairs	0	1
Montana Arts Council	0	0
Montana Historical Society	0	1
Montana State Library	0	0
Natural Resources & Conservation	0	3
Office of Public Instruction	8	5
Office of Public Defender	0	0
Political Practices	0	0
Public Health & Human Services	21	10
Public Service Commission	0	3
Revenue	7	5
School for the Deaf and Blind	0	0
Secretary of State	0	1
State Auditor	0	2
Transportation	1	5
Total Number of Employees Voluntarily Transferring Between Executive Branch Agencies	96	

*Figures in this report may differ from the 2012 Employee Profile. This report only includes permanent employees who voluntarily transferred between executive branch agencies. Also, the summary in the 2012 Employee Profile incorrectly states we interviewed 88 employees who transferred between executive branch agencies. We interviewed 85 employees and updated percentages in this report to reflect the correct number of respondents.